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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE, EUR/RPM

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SUBJECT: TURKEY'S PERSPECTIVE ON NATO-EU RELATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey, Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

Summary

¶1. (C) Turkey's position on NATO-EU relations is tied to its policy regarding Cyprus and to its insistence on strict adherence to formal arrangements between the Alliance and the EU. Efforts to press Turkey to agree to any new formal agreements to allow closer NATO-EU cooperation, even if limited to just Afghanistan and Kosovo, may well fail because such a move, in Turkey's view, would amount to the recognition of Cyprus -- which is politically impossible without a resolution of the broader Cyprus question. Turkey might be willing to show greater flexibility on NATO-EU cooperation if the EU would respond to Turkey's goal of greater access to ESDP. Reporting from USEU and elsewhere suggests, however, that this is not likely in the near future. Although this logjam is frustrating and unsatisfactory, we see no prospect of movement on improving NATO-EU cooperation in the short run. In the mean time, we believe the USG should:

-- Weigh carefully additional autonomous (outside of Berlin-Plus) EU-led missions where NATO military support is required (e.g. current discussions regarding gendarmerie training in Afghanistan);

-- In consultation with Turkey, seek creative ways to allow NATO and EU commanders in areas like Kosovo and Afghanistan to work out informal on-the-ground arrangements that would allow for effective cooperation, and urge Turkey to exercise maximum flexibility in allowing such coordination;

-- Urge the EU to respond positively to Turkey's desires related to ESDP and prepare Turkey to take meaningful steps in response to improve NATO-EU relations, particularly in support of better coordination in Kosovo and Afghanistan;

-- Press for more focused U.N. mediation with Cyprus negotiations to achieve progress toward a comprehensive and mutually acceptable settlement in 2009, which could set the stage for enduring improvements in NATO-EU ties.

End Summary.

¶2. (C) In light of growing European voices, particularly in Brussels, singling out Turkey for blame in the logjam preventing closer NATO-EU ties, and discussions about potential new EU-led missions in Afghanistan, we think it useful to provide a review of Turkey's perspective on NATO-EU relations.

BACKGROUND

¶3. (C) Keeping Cyprus out of NATO-EU deliberations is linked to the unresolved status of Cyprus, which remains a sensitive, core national issue for Turkey. Turkey believes that allowing Cyprus to participate in any international forum in which it is not already a member, especially in a forum where Turkey has NATO "veto power," would undermine the Turkish Cypriot negotiating position and would be tantamount to recognition of Cyprus. This is a non-starter for all Turkish political parties across the ideological spectrum. (Note: Turkey continues to refer to the Republic of Cyprus as the "Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus" and has no diplomatic relations with Nicosia; Turkey remains the only country to have recognized the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus." End Note).

¶4. (C) In anticipation of Cypriot membership in the EU, Turkey worked hard to ensure that Cyprus would be excluded from NATO-EU strategic cooperation in the negotiations that ultimately culminated with the a set of arrangements outlining NATO-EU cooperation, which was confirmed by a NAC decision in December 2002, and reaffirmed with an exchange of letters between the NATO and EU secretaries general in 2003. All NATO members at the time agreed to the terms Turkey demanded as a condition for its support of NATO-EU cooperation: "NATO-EU strategic cooperation and the implementation of Berlin Plus arrangements will be confined to NATO members and those non-NATO EU members that have subscribed to the Partnership for Peace Framework Document..." (Note: All EU countries except Cyprus and Malta meet this criteria. Malta has reapplied for PfP membership. End Note).

¶5. (C) Turkey argues that all NATO-EU cooperation is, by definition, strategic in nature and therefore, Cyprus should not be allowed to participate in any formal discussions between NATO and the EU. The EU, we understand, does not agree and believes that all EU members should be included in discussions with NATO on all subjects except those pertaining to Berlin Plus operations. In practice, this has meant that NATO and the EU are only able formally to discuss issues related to Berlin Plus operations (EU-led operations requiring NATO support).

¶6. (C) Turkey has shown some flexibility in agreeing to a few informal consultations among all NATO and EU members (on Darfur and Kosovo), participates in informal gatherings of NATO and EU member states which also include other nations (e.g. Transatlantic Dinners) and is open to "on-the-ground" coordination between NATO and EU commanders, but continues to oppose any formal authorization for NATO and the EU to cooperate outside the parameters established by the "Agreed Framework." Turkey has also been a steadfast contributor to ESDP operations and remains the largest non-EU contributor to ESDP missions. In response to an EU request, Turkey is currently planning to increase its contributions to the EULEX mission in Kosovo from 38 to 150 police officers.

NATO-EU BLOCKAGE: ANKARA IS NOT THE ONLY PROBLEM

¶7. (C) Turkish officials are angered by allegations that Turkey is blocking NATO-EU cooperation, and believe that many Allies are choosing to forget or deliberately misinterpreting what was agreed to in 2003. In Turkey's view, the EU has yet to honor commitments it had made as part of the "Nice Implementation Document" (the text of which was included in a December 2002 letter from EU SYG Solana to then-NATO SYG Robertson), including provisions for close consultation with NATO and the sharing of information and documents pertaining to EU operations.

¶8. (C) Turkey has also called on the EU (including most recently in a non-paper distributed in Brussels in December 2008) to conclude a security agreement that will allow Turkey access to classified EU information and allow Turkey to have some status within the European Defense Agency that is

commensurate with Norway (another non-EU NATO ally). Turkey believes both requests are being blocked by Cyprus. If the EU were to respond positively to these Turkish requests (which Turkey does not expect given the block by Cyprus), it would give us ammunition to press Turkey to show additional flexibility in NATO-EU cooperation, especially in Kosovo and Afghanistan where improved NATO-EU cooperation is in Turkey's interest.

¶9. (C) Perceived bad faith on the part of the EU in its dealings with Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots also taint Turkey's views on NATO-EU cooperation. A refrain we often hear is that Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots did everything right in support of the Annan Plan in 2004 and has received nothing in return, despite EU promises to end the Turkish Cypriot's isolation following the failed referendum. The Greek Cypriots, on the other hand, were awarded EU membership even though they opposed the Annan Plan. This sense of injustice, especially given Cypriot blocks on Turkey's ESDP desiderata, makes Turkey even less willing to compromise on closer NATO-EU cooperation.

WHAT NOW?

¶10. (C) Unfortunately, we see no short-term solutions to this roadblock in closer NATO-EU cooperation. In the mean time, we urge caution on USG support for new EU-led missions in theaters where NATO support will be indispensable. This would include a potential gendarmerie training mission in Afghanistan that is currently being considered. While Turkey believes the mission is important and may be able to contribute to it, having the EU lead the mission will guarantee a negative response from Turkey and bog the mission down in NATO-EU theological quagmire. Given the importance of this mission, we might at great cost in high level US effort jawbone Turkey to a compromise, but we caution that similar efforts on Kosovo NATO-ESDP relations have little to show.

¶11. (C) We recommend Washington also consider consulting more closely with Turkey on crafting a way forward on improving "on-the-ground" cooperation between NATO and EU commanders in Kosovo and Afghanistan. While we do not expect Turkey to relent on its objections to concluding formal agreements, Turkey wants to see the international community's efforts succeed in both theaters and should be willing to consider ways, short of formal agreements, to ensure that commanders have what they need to succeed in the field.

¶12. (C) Even as we urge Turkey to show maximum flexibility to support NATO-EU cooperation, we should urge the EU to respond positively to the specific requests Turkey has made regarding ESDP. We should also continue to press for a comprehensive and mutually acceptable settlement of the Cyprus question under U.N. auspices that would pave the way for more enduring, robust NATO-EU cooperation that is supported by all sides.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Turkey>

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